



February 2-3, 2024

כד שבט תשפ"ד

Candle Lighting 5:06 PM

Parashat Yitro יתרו Exodus 18:1 - 20:23

Stone - p 394 Hertz - p 288 Etz Hayim - p 432

Haftarah ישעיה 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6

Stone - p 1154 Hertz - p 302 Etz Hayim - p 452

Kiddush is sponsored by
the Congregation

Shabbat ends 6:06 PM

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

Rabbi Seth D Gordon – Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com
Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director – traditionalcong@gmail.com

IN-PERSON SERVICES

Sunday - 8:30 AM

Tuesday - 6:30 PM

Thursday - 7:00 AM

Shabbat - 9:30 AM

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We welcome new members!

*If you or someone you know would like to receive membership information,
please contact Chris Brown, Membership VP, at 636-288-5356*

On This Week's Torah Portion - Yitro

In October of 2008, just months before the Burj Khalifa was officially opened in Dubai as the tallest building in the world, the UAE government and a firm called Nakheel announced, with much fanfare, that construction would begin on a new, even taller building. Rising to over a kilometer in height, the proposed "Nakheel Tower" would be something the world had never seen. The project was scheduled to include mind-bending numbers: It would be home to 55,000 people living in residential apartments, and a daily work destination for 45,000 more. It would host 250,000 square meters of hotels, and 100,000 square meters of retail space.

You probably never heard of this building, because just a year later, in December of 2009, the project was shelved.

Sometimes ambitious projects are just that: too ambitious. They gain a lot of steam in the beginning, they generate a lot of excitement, and then—they fizzle out. Arabian skyscrapers aside, this is a phenomenon we ought to be wary of in our personal lives.

Our parshah opens with its eponymous character Yitro (Jethro) arriving in the desert to greet his famous son-in-law, Moses. As we read earlier, Moses first met Jethro (a Midianite priest) while fleeing his Egyptian pursuers. In what seems to be a trend from that era, Moses met Jethro's daughter Tziporah at a well in Midian and ended up marrying her.

Despite being steeped in pagan culture, Jethro was moved by the events that had transpired with the Israelites and decided to join their faith. We read of his initial meeting with Moses in the desert, and after their first exchange, the Torah tells us:

Moses told his father-in-law [about] all that the G-d had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians on account of Israel, [and about] all the hardships that had befallen them on the way, and [that] G-d had saved them.

Jethro responds with much joy, and the rest is history. All's well; as far as father-in-law-and-son-in-law reunions can go, this one seems pretty swell.

But there's one problem: the entire exchange seems superfluous. The Torah makes it sound as if Jethro hadn't heard anything about the Exodus, and Moses is telling it to him now for the first time. But certainly, Jethro knew about it before; after all, the Torah told us very clearly in the first verse of the chapter, "Jethro, the chieftain of Midian, heard all that G-d had done for Moses and for Israel, His people that G-d had taken Israel out of Egypt."

The entire premise for Jethro's arrival in the desert to join arms with the people was because he was so moved by the events of the Exodus! So why did Moses feel the need to tell his father-in-law the details yet again? And why does Jethro seem so surprised to hear it? Moses wasn't telling him anything he didn't know. Rather, he was trying to see if his father-in-law really possessed the mettle to join G-d's people.

To explain: Inspiration is great. It flares up, gets you excited and passionate, and at that stage, you do everything with gusto. But then, time passes, and if you're not extremely careful, it can very quickly fizzle out. The only way to ensure continued engagement is to maintain the memory of your original inspiration and try to summon it up as life goes on. Sometimes that works, and sometimes it doesn't. Such is the nature of life.

The people had been taken out of Egypt with the most remarkable miracles and display of G-dly fireworks. Inspiration was everywhere. In more Kabbalistic terms, the magnitude of inspiration was off the charts. The Zohar speaks of how the people at that time had sunk to the depths of what's called "The 49 Gates of Impurity," and then, in the blink of an eye, G-d whisked them away amid glorious miracles. They were simply on a high.

But of course, nothing lasts forever. Soon, they encountered their first challenge at the banks of the Red Sea, and sure enough, they didn't pass with flying colors. Both physically and spiritually, the people demonstrated that their initial inspiration had already worn off. Some of them were scared, clamoring to turn back to Egypt. Others openly questioned G-d, renouncing their newfound faith.

It was a struggle. The beginning was all smiles and inspiration, but then the slog commenced. They were indeed able to carry on, but only by recalling the memory of their initial inspiration and adding a dollop of hard work. This is what Moses told his father-in-law. The key words are, "Moses told his father-in-law . . . about all the hardships that had befallen them on the way." Meaning, "It hasn't exactly been a bouquet of roses. Sure, it was great in the beginning, and we were all very inspired, but then hardships befell us along the way, and it's been quite a grind—physically, and more importantly, spiritually. So, right now, my dear father-in-law, I can see you're inspired. And that's amazing. But what will you do when that wears off? Will you still be on board?"

Jethro answered, "I get it. I know that, and I know that I must keep this initial inspiration, just as you have done. I am aware that my current flame is at its brightest, and I will do my best to keep it burning, even after its initial shine begins to wane." And with that, he was accepted into the fold.

Jethro was smart enough not to abandon his ambitious project. We ought to do the same.

Remember this: There may come a time when you get inspired. It could be a life-changing epiphany that drives you to completely change your ways, or it could be a small realization that marginally improves one pocket of your life.

These events do happen, and when the change occurs, you're the better for it.

But bear in mind that the initial flame will inevitably die down. Know that in advance, so you don't end up like a sorry construction project abandoned in a desert. Keep that in the back of your head as you go through the throes of the initial passion, and do your best to bottle up whatever inspiration you can to keep you going for many days ahead.

Then, eventually, you'll be able to top off your personal skyscraper.

**Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Aharon Loschak**



ULPAN IVRIT: Adult Modern Hebrew

with Ophira Nitzan Melnick



Always wanted to learn to speak Hebrew? Or brush up on your skills? Here's your chance to learn with Ophira, as she offers an interactive program for learning to speak, read, and understand modern Hebrew. Knowledge of modern Hebrew will enhance your understanding of Torah and prayers, strengthen your Jewish identity and connection to Israel, and do wonders to sharpen your brain! Courses focus on Hebrew grammar, reading comprehension, and conversational skills.

Four levels will be offered - two in-person classes at Traditional, and two on Zoom. Each session will meet for 12 classes in the Fall and 12 in the Spring. **Registration is now open for the SPRING session;** tuition is \$108 for the complete 12-class session, plus the cost of a textbook.

Available courses are:

1. ULPAN IVRIT - BEGINNING MODERN HEBREW - Level 1

Wednesdays - 6:15pm-7:30pm at Traditional Congregation

Spring Session: 12 classes starting February 7th, 2024

2. ULPAN IVRIT - BEGINNING MODERN HEBREW - Level 2

Mondays - 7:00pm - 8:00pm on ZOOM

Spring Session: 12 classes starting February 5th, 2024

3. ULPAN IVRIT - INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

Mondays - 5:30pm - 6:30pm on ZOOM

Spring Session: 12 classes starting February 5th, 2024

4. ULPAN IVRIT - ADVANCED LEVEL

Mondays - 2:00pm-3:00pm at Traditional Congregation

Spring Session: 12 classes starting February 5th, 2024

For a full description of each course, as well as registration information, go to: [ULPAN IVRIT](#)

Please contact Ophira Nitzan Melnick at ophiramelnick@gmail.com for questions about course content.

Please contact Marian Gordon at traditionalcong@gmail.com for questions about registration or class schedules.

**Register now,
classes begin
early February!**

A TASTE OF SOUP!

Sun, Feb 18, 2024

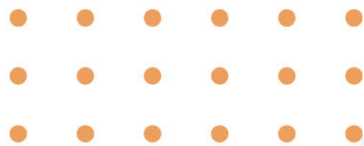


5:15 - 7:00 PM

ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT SOUP BUFFET!

MEAT & VEGETARIAN

BREAD FOR DUNKING + DESSERT



\$16pp in advance (\$18pp walk-ins) Kids under 5 are free!
\$5 per additional carry-out container

Register here by Feb. 7 or go to:
<https://bit.ly/3S9Pmlj>

or send payment with names attending to:
Traditional Congregation

12437 Ladue Road St Louis MO 63141

314-576-5230

www.traditional-congregation.org



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have a tribute card sent to them!***

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Cards may be sent to anyone!

(we'll just need email or snail mail info for non-members of TradCong)

Minimum donation to Traditional:

Digital card: \$7 Printed card: \$10

Order online at:

<https://www.traditional-congregation.org/donate>

OR

contact Angela at: angelatradcong@gmail.com

(note Angela's new email address)



PRAYER

Eternal God, in whose service we are enlisted and in whose name we have gathered, lift our thoughts that we may renew our minds;
and lead us beside the still waters so that we may restore our souls.

We thank You, O God, for our hallowed memories and for our abiding hopes.

Help us to show that we are Your children by
giving ourselves faithfully to Your tasks.

Help us to convert our convictions into conduct and commitment.

Help us to narrow the gap between our principles and our practices,
between our aspirations and our actions.

*Keep us from blaming others for our own faults; help us
to heal the wounds we have thoughtlessly inflicted.*

Help us to face our defeats with courage and to carry
our successes with humility.

*Keep us from the pride that blinds the mind and from the anger
that locks the heart.*

Make us loyal to our convictions in the face of falsehood;
but help us to speak the truth in love.

*On this Shabbat, draw us closer to Your teachings,
closer to each other, and closer to You.*

(Unknown)

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

The debt of gratitude we owe our mother and father goes forward not
backward. What we owe our parents is the bill presented to us by our children.

Nancy Friday